

Dean Jeopardizes St. Clair Strategy

Excerpted -

Much of the defense offered in Nixon's behalf was presented previously by top former presidential aides in testimony to the Senate Watergate Committee. But the evidence released yesterday does include an "eyes only" memo written by Richard Helms, then director of the Central Intelligence Agency, to his deputy Vernon B. Walters.

In this memo Helms said the CIA had requested the Federal Bureau of Investigation to "desist from expanding this Watergate investigation into other areas which may well, eventually, run afoul of our operations."

The memo was presented by St. Clair in behalf of the President's contention that he had been fearful that a Watergate probe would expose unrelated CIA activities.

Helms wrote the memo to Walters to brief him on a forthcoming meeting with FBI Director L. Patrick Gray in which Walters was to represent Helms. In the memo Helms said he already had instructed two subordinates in advance of the meeting that the CIA should "distance itself" from the investigation.

"I told them that I wanted no free-wheeling exposition of hypotheses or any effort made to conjecture about responsibility or likely objectives of the Watergate intrusion," Helms wrote.

12 JUL 1974

Approved For Release 2005/07/01 : CIA-RDP91-00901R000700090034-8

Break-in Probe And FBI, CIA

By William Chapman
Washington Post Staff Writer

"In short . . .," wrote CIA Director Richard Helms in a memo to his aide. "It is up to the FBI to lay some cards on the table. Otherwise, we are unable to be of help."

Helms's terse instruction was delivered to Vernon Walters, then his deputy director, on June 28, 1972, for guidance in dealing with the FBI. Thus, 11 days after the Watergate break-in, the nation's two secretive agencies—the FBI and CIA—were locked in an antagonistic struggle over how far the FBI should go in unraveling the crime.

The Helms memo surfaces publicly for the first time in Book II of the House Judiciary Committee's evidence, released yesterday, covering the period from June 17, 1972, to Feb. 9, 1973. It lays out the facts—most already published—on the alleged attempts of the White House to interfere with the FBI investigation of the break-in.

It pinpoints the ambiguities in Helms's position. He was under pressure from the White House to tell acting FBI Director L. Patrick Gray that the pursuit of campaign money coming from Mexico might uncover secret CIA activities in Mexico.

At a June 23 meeting, Helms told White House aides H. R. (Bob) Halde- man and John D. Ehrlichman there was no CIA involvement in Watergate and that the FBI investigation could not jeopardize any CIA activities.

According to Walters' testimony, however, Haldeman kept insisting that Helms warn the FBI about prospective trouble arising from its investigation in Mexico.

Helms's June 23 memo—written five days after the meeting at the White House—gives a different glimpse of Helms. In his memo to Walters, he wrote:

"In addition, we still adhere to the request that they [the FBI] confine themselves to the personalities already arrested or directly under suspicion and that they desist from expanding this investigation into other areas which may well, eventually, run afoul of our operations."

Helms has never publicly explained the discrepancy between this memo and his testimony last summer that no CIA operations would be jeopardized.

One explanation in Helms's behalf was supplied last fall by CIA Director William E. Colby. Colby said in a memo to a Senate committee that Helms had in fact been disturbed about FBI leaks when he proposed the agency's investigation be limited.

Helms also was concerned about an FBI "fishing expedition into CIA operations" when he laid down the guidelines, Walters Colby suggested.

The House committee evidence also provides a crucial link to President Nixon in the attempts to have the CIA restrict the initial FBI investigation of Watergate in June 1972.

Walters had written a memo in which he quoted Haldeman as saying "It is the President's wish" to involve the CIA. Walters later changed his recollection and said he was not sure Haldeman had made such a statement.

However, in secret Senate testimony made public yesterday, Haldeman says Walters' initial recollection was correct.

In testimony of May 31, 1973, before the Senate Appropriations subcommittee, Haldeman said, "I find it is quite probable that General Walter's Memocon [memorandum of conversation] is more accurate than his subsequent cycles of revisions, and that I probably did say, 'It is the President's wish' because I believed then and I believe now that it was."

The Judiciary Committee narrative also focuses on the story of E. Howard Hunt, the former CIA employee who helped plan the Watergate break-in and whose antics with borrowed CIA equipment alarmed the agency's top brass.

It picks up his story in July 1971, with an account of a telephone call from Ehrlichman to Gen. Robert Cushman, then deputy CIA director, in which Ehrlichman insists that Hunt is working for the President and is to have "carte blanche" treatment at the CIA.

That phone call has been hotly disputed. Ehrlichman has testified—as recently as this week in federal court—that he could not remember making the call.

However, a secretary's notes on the phone call are part of the committee's evidence. According to those notes, Ehrlichman told Cushman:

"I want to alert you that an old acquaintance, Howard Hunt, has been asked by the President to do some special consultant work on security problems. He may be contacting you sometime in the future for some assistance. I wanted you to know that he was in fact doing some things for the President. He is a long-time acquaintance with the people here. He may want some help on computer runs and other things. You should consider he has pretty much carte blanche."

Still another CIA memorandum reproduced by the Judiciary Committee indicates that Hunt's activities very much alarmed officials, fears that he would embarrass the agency. It is an affidavit from an unnamed CIA official assigned to the Executive Office

The of been che cluding into a to associate without The offic agency c gear wer domestic

But tr Book II evidence

Dean III and others in the White House attempted to divert the FBI investigation of Watergate by implying it would unearth CIA secrets.

The Walters memorandum, suggesting that Haldeman tried to use the CIA to block the FBI probe, is crucial to the narrative. The large amount of documentation involving Haldeman's statements indicates the Judiciary Committee staff believes the statements are evidence for impeachment of the President, whose name Haldeman invoked.

Walters wrote that at the June 23 meeting in the White House Haldeman repeatedly warned that the FBI inves-

"I want to alert you that an old acquaintance, Howard Hunt, has been asked by the President to do some special work on security problems."

tigation "might lead to some important people." He coupled that, Walters said, with a claim that CIA activities in Mexico—despite Helms's denial—might be endangered.

Haldeman was reluctant to comment on that when questioned by a Senate Appropriations subcommittee in executive session, in May 1973. A copy of that testimony was published yesterday by the Judiciary Committee. Responding reluctantly to questions by Chairman John L. McClellan (D-Ark.), Haldeman at first dismissed the account as Walters' own "characterization" of the conversation.

McClellan: "Is his characterization of the conversation wrong, or correct?"

Haldeman: "I have no material conflict with it."

McClellan: "Then you said that, or something like that, I would assume, 'I would assume'."

Walters also wrote in his memorandum that Haldeman said the affair was becoming "embarrassing."

continued

STAT

STAT

Approved For Release 2005/07/01 : CIA-RDP91-00901R000700090034-8